

The great industries recently established in the North required for their success a high protective tariff, while the South, almost exclusively devoted to agriculture, considered the protective system injurious to its interests. Bills had been passed in 1816 and 1824 increasing the duties in spite of southern opposition, so that when another bill was introduced in 1828, for a still further increase, the people of the South strenuously objected. The measure was passed however, but the result was that the above named doctrine was openly and forcibly asserted. A State convention, held in South Carolina, declared the tariff laws null and void in that State, and forbade the people to pay the duties.

Such, then, was the state of affairs that provoked the great parliamentary controversy that I have mentioned, and such was the occasion which gave to Daniel Webster the remarkable distinction of being the greatest parliamentary debater and statesman on this side of the Atlantic. The wonderful oratorical ability of Mr. Hayne, and the force and vividness with which he expounded his theories, made them appear both necessary and practicable. His speech was such a success that he himself and all his supporters were filled with confidence, and his opponents were indeed anxious as to the outcome of the discussion, and impatiently awaited Webster's reply. He began by making a criticism of his opponent's mode of attack, followed out the order taken by that speaker, touching on the various points of dispute, till he finally came to the nullification doctrine, which, as he understood it, was as follows :

That it is the right of State Legislatures to interfere whenever in their judgment, the general government transcends its constitutional limits, and to arrest the operation of its laws ; that the ultimate power of judging the constitutional extent of its own authority is not lodged exclusively with the general government, or any branch of it ; but that on the contrary, the State may lawfully decide for themselves, and each state for itself, whether in a given case, the act of the general government transcends its powers; and finally that this right is a right existing under the constitution not merely in cases of extreme necessity.